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VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

July 1, 1947

For your information

TO ALL ASSISTANT STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS, VFV

Subject: News Letter

TOPNOTCH PLANNING

There's been a lot of good State-level planning going on this spring. That's a conclusion I can't help coming to in perusing reports from some of the States. Would that we could hear from more States concerning your youth activities, for these we could add to the good ideas recorded on the next pages.

We're especially impressed by the State news letters, a relatively new project for many State offices. In many of these we've noted timely suggestions about using boy and girl labor, about contacts with schools, and so on. We're impressed by increased interest in the careful selection of live-ins...by Michigan's 4-year VFV survey....reports of Nebraska's fine achievement exercises in schools....New York's plan of work for farm labor specifically calling for educating farmers to work youth shorter hours....another year of good tractor schools in South Dakota....we could go on. We'll get to more below.

IT'S ON THE BOOKS IN CONNECTICUT

Connecticut has a new farm labor bill on youth. State Supervisor Putnam tells us it restricts employment of youth under 14 on all farms employing 15 or more youth. The workday is limited to 8 hours and 6 days a week for 14- and 15-year-olds. Connecticut's State Department of Agriculture will administer the bill.

Tobacco growers in Connecticut assumed youth working standards similar to these during the war.

WHO IS SYLVIA?

Sylvia Colt must be an interesting girl to know. After you've read her article in the latest issue of The Vermont Farm Volunteer, you'll agree with me, I think. Sylvia is a New York girl who has been a VFV in Vermont for four summers. She's a freshman at Cornell Agricultural College this year and won't be returning to Vermont this summer because she has enlisted in the International Land Club and expects to be assigned to a farm in England.

Sylvia's comments about life on the farm in the article make as good reading as we've seen for a long time. Look for them in the copy of The Volunteer which we're soon sending your way.

FOR BETTER DETASSELING

When R. W. Oberlin, of our Federal staff, came back from the Midwest recently, he was mighty impressed

by the recognition program he had seen in Nebraska. He particularly mentioned J. V. Srb's interesting talks to young people about the value of work when he addressed groups of school youngsters. It seems to us that Nebraska is combining recognition with recruiting in this way of doing things and it undoubtedly contributes to the good results the Cornhuskers get from youth when it's corn-detasseling time.

VEV Supervisor Srb likes to tell youth that work is a blessing, that it can be pleasurable, that it contributes to the welfare of the individual, community, and nation, that it dignifies the worker.

Srb says he plans to follow up these recognition meetings with a series of "Mother and Youth Detassellers" meetings in June and July. There he will discuss the detasseling job in its relation to farmers and the community, how workers should condition themselves for the job, their responsibility at work, and the parents' part in the program.

Here, it seems to me, is the teaching of farm workers that fits right into the Extension conception of education for a better agriculture.

AN OREGON SOLUTION

Let us say you have a tight labor situation on one hand---and school still in session on the other. And

you happen to need the youngsters to get the job done. There's nothing new about the situation, but many farm labor people are trying to mix it with a peacetime aim of preventing as far as possible any interruption of school schedules.

Roy Davidson, an Oregon county farm labor assistant, foresaw a labor squeeze in strawberries this spring and called school people, growers, and processors together.

Here's what they decided: That no uniform procedure for all sections of the county could be determined. A grower would ask for dismissal of school pupils only as a last resort and would make contact with the school in his own vicinity 4 or 5 days ahead of the time they were needed. It was decided to start a few days early in large patches, to trade and consolidate crews with neighbors, and to use young workers on Saturdays and perhaps on Sundays.

Several counties used this plan, says Russ Adams. "None of us," he declares, "are enthusiastic about requesting the release of school children for harvest work at this time."

HOOSIER BEGINNING

The "Nickel-a-Day" insurance plan got its start in Indiana with the corn detasseling camps there---but

since that time the idea has spread in several different directions. The American Income Insurance Co. of Indianapolis tells us that the plan was used last year in Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Utah.

This company insured a total of 5,968 VFV's and collected premiums which amounted to \$1,705. It paid out claims which totaled \$1,347.

NOTED WITH PRIDE

A well-illustrated feature article about South Dakota's tractor schools in the Sioux City (Iowa) Journal's Farm Weekly....Oregon's new publication telling the 4-year story of the farm labor program and including many good youth pictures....The new color film, Tobacco Valley, issued by the Shade Tobacco Growers' Association and telling, among other things, an effective story of youth's working conditions and contribution to the tobacco harvest....Two timely Extension press releases on youth--one from Oregon and one from Maine....The attractive mimeographed illustrations on school youth in Wisconsin's mimeographed Farm Labor News for June.

That although sufficient girls could not finally be recruited for the project, Loraine County, Ohio, vegetable growers wanted the girl campers back this year....That many of you make use of items from this news letter for your own State news letters....That Putnam County, Illinois, boys were solving the labor problems in asparagus fields in late May with the best boy worker making as high as \$1.12 per hour....That New York's Farm Labor Pains congratulates Jack Weaver, Harry Haight, and the New York City Board of Education for their fine youth program.

INTERESTING ANSWERS

Michigan has done on a State scale what we have long wanted done on a wider basis and what we hope to see done in other States in the future. VFV Supervisor Doris Shimkus has completed the summary of the survey which she entitled "Four Years of Victory Farm Volunteers."

I am sure that if you write Mrs. Shimkus at East Lansing she will be glad to send you a copy of this mimeographed report. Should you fail to see a copy, here are a few results especially worthy of mention:

1. Thirty-five out of 76 counties completed and returned the questionnaire, filled out either by the county agent or by the farm labor assistant.
2. Response came from both "big" and "little" farm labor counties.
3. In helping determine workers needed, EFL personnel replied that past experience was the best method for live-ins and voted fairly high for a formal survey of labor needs before recruiting day workers.
4. Obtaining enrollment lists through schools was voted the first choice for recruiting "live-aways" and day workers alike. The "Buddy-Round-Up" and "grapevine" systems rated fourth and fifth.
5. In selection of youth, experience was named the most important qualification for live-ins; ability to get along with others came first for day workers.
6. The minimum age suggested for live-ins was 15.2 years, and 13.1 for day workers.

7. "One central point with an EFL representative present" got the most votes for a method of dispatching day workers.
8. Supervision by the grower-employer was rated the best type of supervision over an adult member of the grower's family and over a trained employed field supervisor.
9. County workers reported 100 percent agreement in favor of Extension's recommending and publicizing insurance for all youth workers.
10. Of 35 counties reporting, 96 percent have recognized individual VFV's formally and 75 percent thought recognition should be continued in the postwar period.

DIXIE TOUR REPORT

There's nothing like southern hospitality, says Roberta Clark of our VFV staff after her visit to

5 Southern States in late May. Roberta appreciated not only the thoughtful planning made for her visit but the new picture of farm labor problems which she got from an area she had not visited before. Among them: colored workers, migrants and migrant camps, southern "ranches" and livestock farms on land converted from row crops, and the intensive utilization of local youth in the Kentucky-Tennessee strawberry harvest.

In Mississippi, M. A. Rowzee accompanied her in a visit which time and again produced evidence that increased industrialization is going to give farmers competition for labor. There were just as many evidences of increased mechanization, however, and Mississippi is meeting this challenge with more training for farm workers....In southern Georgia, she worked with L. C. "Shorty" Walker, southern area farm labor man, and there she had an interesting visit to a nationally known soup company's farm where tomato plant-pulling was in full swing. A great many young children--all colored--work in the fields in this area....Visiting just three southern counties in South Carolina with W. L. Brannon, Miss Clark missed the white VFV's who take such a big part in tobacco and peach harvests in that State. But she took advantage of the time to see migrants in snap beans and to get a thorough view of migrant housing. Naturally, it's increased her interest in the problems of migrant boys and girls.

In Tennessee and western Kentucky, she saw by far the greatest number of boys and girls in the field, for it was the peak of the strawberry harvest. Fred Colby was her guide in Tennessee and E. C. Alexander in the Bluegrass State. Working conditions, she reports, are generally pleasant for youth although she'd like to see more trucks with end gates. And in Kentucky, good county coordination and publicity were helping to meet the really tight labor situation for berries.

DIRECT QUOTATIONS

"Teen-age groups are beginning to seek farm work for the summer. This type of labor should be encouraged.

It is good for the youth and beneficial to the farmer."--Colorado's Farm Labor Items.

"For the (Connecticut) farmers, there isn't any doubt that the help of boys and girls is necessary if they are going to keep up their high production. There isn't anybody else to do the job."--P. L. Putnam, Connecticut State Supervisor.

"School youth may be needed in the fall harvest. Excuses from classes will depend upon the willingness of the local school authorities, says Mr. Earl Little, of the State board of education."--New Hampshire EFL news letter.

"Farmers should be informed that unless boys are hired now, they may find other employment and thus be lost for the entire summer for farm work."--South Dakota news letter.

MANHATTAN ANGLE ON SAFETY

Benjamin Towne, farm adviser at Stuyvesant High School in New York City, has become particularly interested

in farm safety through his work in selecting boys for summer farm work in cooperation with New York's farm cadet program. And speaking of selection, Towne writes us that only 50 of the 100 Stuyvesant High boys who wanted to do farm work "will be allowed to leave for farm work this summer."

But on the subject of safety, Towne is especially anxious to see more educational work done with farmers and farm workers toward preventing accidents. To this end he has worked up two mimeographed sheets listing do's and don'ts for the Stuyvesant boys who leave for the farm.

That reminds me to remind you that July 20 to 26 is National Farm Safety Week. Maybe you'll agree with me that every week really ought to be farm safety week.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING....

Reports from many scattered States certainly indicate that many boys and girls will be seeking farm work this

summer....Some county people in Pennsylvania, however, say that boys sometime want too high wages as live-ins....Fifty high school boys in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, had signed up for pea harvesting in May. They took the place of foreign workers....New Hampshire farmers are ordering Boston boys as live-ins....Recruiting for Connecticut tobacco camps in Pennsylvania this spring seems to have been no problem, with more than enough youth wanting to go.

Arrangements have been made in Jasper County, Georgia, for school children to pick up peach drops, with school teachers as supervisors....Essex County, New Jersey, reports, "a lot of fine boys and girls are being signed up" to go to Vermont as live-ins.

This New Jersey-Vermont cooperation seems to have worked out very well....Reports during May from Iowa say many youth were seeking farm work. With the disastrous crop losses in that State we wonder if youngsters will get much farm work this summer.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

In New York, VFW Supervisor Jack Weaver has prepared an instruction manual for county supervisors. What

does it include? Well, listed are items on school program adjustments, farm work permits and employment certificates, day-haul services, responsibility of the various services involved in the Farm Cadet program, duties of supervisors, insurance, accidents and sickness, and travel accounts for supervisors.

You'll be interested to know that 38 counties in New York will have special Farm Cadet supervisors this year--meaning that live-ins placed in those counties will get the attention of one person whose sole responsibility is to help them make adjustments and do a successful job. The large percentage of boys placed are big-city youth, chiefly from the New York City area, although New York farm labor assistants will lay more stress this year on placing their own city boys on farms within their own counties.

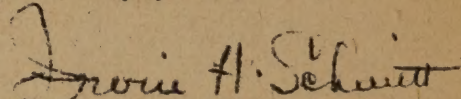
At any rate, it appears that New York's program for placing urban boys in summer farm jobs may be here to stay. State funds this year pay for three-fourths of the program's expenses, indicating strong State concern for the program.

A TRIP TO VIRGINIA

I had an interesting visit with D. A. Tucker, Virginia's State farm labor supervisor, in the

Norfolk strawberry area during May. Several Midwestern States are on our field schedules for July, but definite plans have not yet been made.

Sincerely yours,



Irvin H. Schmitt, Chief
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Extension Farm Labor Program

(Copy to Directors, Editors,
State Supervisors)

